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October 21, 2019

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pensions Committee

The Honorable Doug Jones
Member
Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pensions Committee

Dear Chairman Alexander and Senator Jones,

The Tennessee Higher Education Commission and Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation write to express appreciation and strong support for the FAFSA Simplification Act of 2019.

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the way nearly 20 million Americans access federal, state, and institution based financial aid to attend college each year. However, the complexity of the form and chilling effect of the verification process is one of the biggest barriers for our most vulnerable students to enter a postsecondary institution.

For Tennessee, the complexity of the FAFSA presents a barrier for students attempting to enroll in Tennessee Promise, Tennessee Reconnect, and other financial aid programs like the HOPE Access Grant. In the 2018-19 school year, over 400,000 Tennesseans submitted a FAFSA, and that information was the cornerstone to access both state and federal aid. Simplifying the FAFSA would improve college access for students in Tennessee by allowing the federal government and our state to better target financial aid to the neediest students. In particular, Tennessee sees great value for our State in the FAFSA Simplification Act based on four key aspects:

1. Statewide efforts to promote FAFSA completion and college enrollment thrive on simple messages. The new simple Pell Grant formula will allow statewide college access messaging campaigns to inform students and families about how much Pell Grant they will likely be eligible to receive based on a table or simple calculator.

2. Tennessee and its public institutions depend on the Needs Analysis formula to annually award over \$400 million in State appropriated student financial aid. By continuing the availability of this calculation and most of the variables behind it, our State will have the to continue awarding state and institutional aid without disruption.
3. FAFSA filing can quickly become challenging for applicants when sorting through difficult financial questions. By relying on tax information the federal government already has on file, students and families do not have to find additional information and are unlikely to be selected for burdensome verification processes.
4. The flexibility provided to financial aid administrators regarding professional judgement and applicants to file provisionally independent will be transformative for our State's most vulnerable students.

Thank you both for your strong commitment to this issue. It is important to enact this reform which will help us reach our State's goals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "MK22", is written over the printed name.

Mike Krause